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Assignment 3\_1: What is the Information Search Process (ISP)?

The Information Search Process (ISP) is a six-stage research method developed by Carol Kuhlthau that takes into account feelings, thoughts and actions involved in completing an inquiry. She believes that when students are aware of their emotional experiences related to the research process, they will be able to reflect on them and become better learners. Likewise, when educational personnel such as teachers and librarians realize the emotional highs and lows associated with each stage, they are better able to intervene at the appropriate time and aid the students through the process in a positive manner.

Since I have been away from the classroom for so long, it is hard for me to describe a specific experience with students. Honestly, I can’t remember enough details. Therefore I will discuss Kuhlthau’s method in the context of what I can remember in general from student research projects and in my own experience. The last research project I personally completed was probably my Master’s thesis in 2003. My topic was “The Value of Co-curricular Activities and School Involvement in the Success of Heritage High School Students.” I was teaching at Heritage High School at the time. I had to form my thesis, collect data, create data (conducting several staff and student surveys), organize my findings, create an outline, and put it all together (133 pages). It was a bit overwhelming to say the least. I remember feeling anxious about the scope of the project and the amount of work to be done, but also excited about the data I had collected. And after conducting my research, I felt confident that I could successfully argue my thesis - that students who participate in co-curricular activities such as the arts, sports, community service and co-curricular clubs tend to be more successful in high school and beyond. Moreover, I was satisfied with the end product.

I would definitely apply knowledge of Kuhlthau’s ISP to my future work as a librarian or classroom teacher. I think it is vital that students are aware of the different emotions evoked through the research process. Being aware of this emotional rollercoaster will enable them to cope in appropriate ways on future endeavors. Otherwise, they are just going through the motions, not improving. I believe that “learning how to learn” is a key factor in student success. Every time students complete an inquiry, thoughtful reflection should lead to improvement on the next project. With knowledge of Kuhlthau’s ISP, teachers and librarians can aid students in this process and intervene when the emotions become overwhelming.

Works Cited:

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